

BW

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Hon. Anthony Lake
National Security Adviser
Washington DC 20506

Dear Mr. Lake

I very much appreciated the opportunity to hear you just now at the CFR, and to exchange a few words about our vulnerability to biological weapons (BW) attack -- especially on the part of unprotected civilian populations.

The critical points I'd stress to you are:

- By technical consensus, BW have about the same lethal yield per kg. as do nuclear when disseminated to unprotected metropolitan centers.
- BW is already widely proliferated; and there is no possibility of proliferation control. There is a very low economic and technological threshold barring access to BW on the part of any state, or of many sub-state groups.
- Our only recourse is deterrence and damage-limitation after attack, the latter being the province of "civil defense". Both are very difficult.

The military hierarchy now has a well-informed and sensitive appreciation of BW as a military threat. I chair a "Blue Ribbon Panel" surveilling the Army's BW-Defense-Research program on behalf of John Deutch, and barring the expected budgetary struggles, I believe there is a sound conceptual basis for current military programs. However, civil defense is not within the DoD's mandate. Our preparedness in that area is just what you would expect in the absence of a clear, technically competent focus of responsibility.

During Desert Shield, I had a fruitful conversation with Brent Scowcroft on the same issue. He took it quite seriously, and the result was at least a skeletal framework of coordination. That has largely evaporated: but I am happy there are glimmers of re-emergence under Dr. Young's leadership, representing the US Public Health Service (see infra.) Inter-agency coordination, in the absence of a clear mandate, is about 10% of where it ought to be.

What I suggest to you is that you get 4 or 5 of the relevant people in one room for you or your designated deputy to hear first hand what resources they could bring to bear, the next time there is an event comparable to the WTC attack, and there is even a question that BW was also involved. Or just a telephone call that the Washington Metro had been contaminated.

As New York City and Washington are the world's juiciest targets for such attacks, I have gone after building some links to municipal authority. At least I knew where to go in New York, and I found Mayor Giuliani and his health and security staff gave rapt attention to a briefing I presented a couple of weeks ago (salient pages enclosed). I spare you technical details on which biological agents to worry about -- actually the OTA recently published a report on proliferation you may have seen. That is unclassified and widely available! It is a serious hindrance to getting appropriate policy notice to these matters, that I do not want to be publishing recipes.

I lament, yes this is one more thing to worry about. But just because the responsibilities and technical capabilities cut across different agencies, I urge that it does deserve your attention.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg

